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Leroy Garrett, Editor

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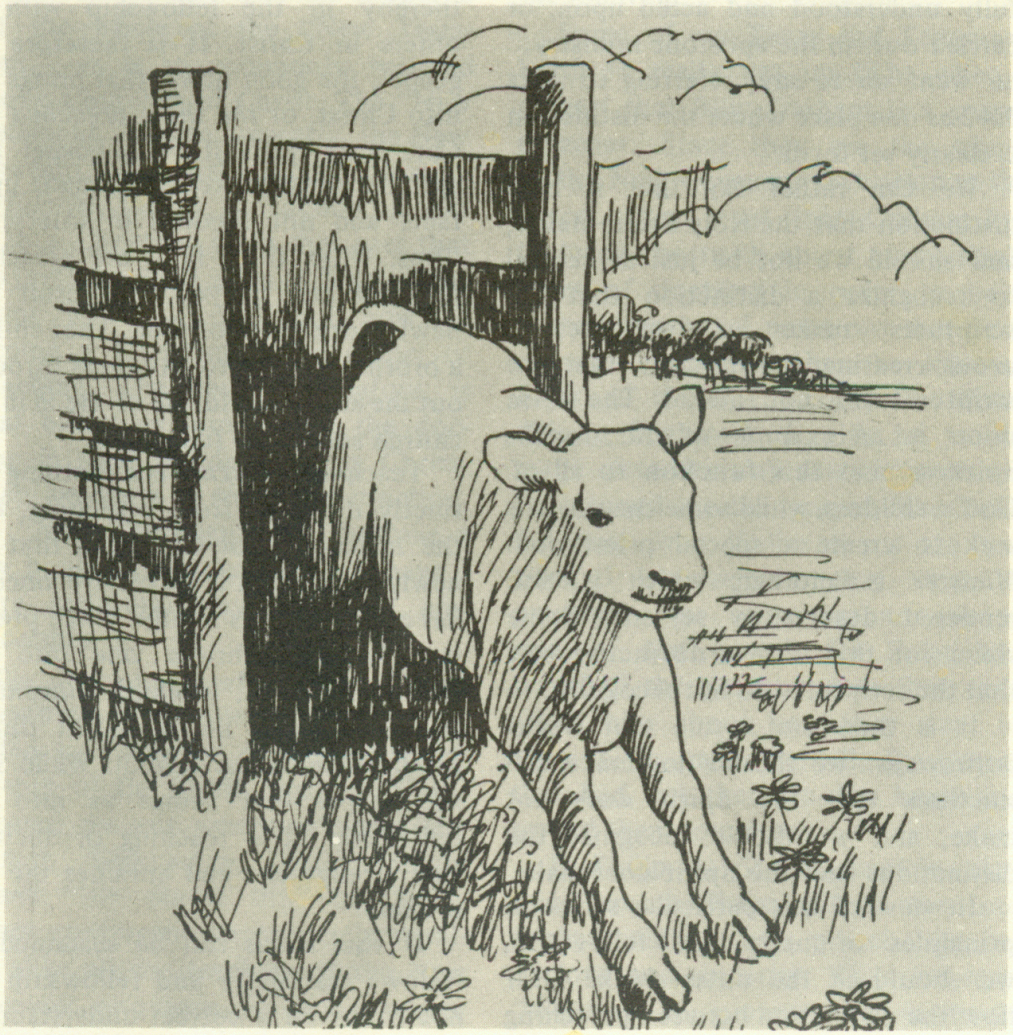

You will be a free and happy as calves let out of a stall.

— Mal. 4:2, Good News Bible

See *For Freedom's Sake in Birmingham*, p. 122

(Drawing by Tom Farr, Denton, Texas)

Volume 19, No. 6 **Leroy Garrett, Editor** **June 1977**

Principles of Unity and Fellowship . . .

PREACHING AND TEACHING: A VITAL DISTINCTION

(Part 1: The Thesis Stated)

Every day in the temple and at home they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ — Acts 5:42

"This is no mere speculative distinction," Alexander Campbell insisted in his 1857 address to the Christian Missionary Society *(Lectures and Ad-dresses, p.* 537). "It was appreciated, fully understood and acted upon, or carried out, in the apostolic ministry," he went on to say, referring to Acts 5:42 as one place where the distinction is clearly set forth.

We can rather say that it is a distinction that the Holy Spirit makes, and should we not be just as careful to recognize a distinction that the scriptures make as we are to avoid creating a distinction that the scriptures do not make? The term *priest is* an example of this, for the Spirit applies this function to all of God's children, while some theologians seek to create a special priesthood. *Minister is* another, which is also rendered deacon or servant. Some claim for this term a distinctive role that the scriptures do not recognize.

It is therefore a rule that works both ways: we should not make distinctions that the Spirit does not make, and we should recognize the distinctions that the Spirit does make.

In view of this particular series on principles of unity and fellowship, we should at the outset make clear how the distinction between preaching and teaching is related to the larger problem of a divided church. It is our position that oneness in Christ and the fellowship of the saints is rooted in the preaching of the gospel. That is, when one hears and obeys the gospel, he enters into Christ and is thereby in the fellowship with all others in Christ. It is therefore the gospel, the good news, that brings one into Christ, or *the thing preached* as 1 Cor. 1:21 puts it. The gospel is a specific message, *ker-ugma,* made up of facts and not theories or interpretations. When these facts are preached, believed and obeyed, the result is a newly-born child of God. That child is a brother or sister to all others through-out the entire world. He or she is in the church and in the fellowship.

Teaching, *didache, is* something distinctly different from preaching. It is the instruction or education that the newly-born child is to receive once he has entered God's family. While preaching, *kerugma,* brings one into the school of Christ, teaching, *didache, is* the curriculum he is taught during his lifetime in the school. While it is the gospel that brings us into the fellowship, it is teaching or doctrine that strengthens and enriches the fellowship.

If this thesis can be sustained, it follows that unity and fellowship are not based on a correct understanding and adherence to all that the New Covenant scriptures teach (or are supposed to teach!), but rather upon one's relationship to Christ as reflected in his or her obedience to the gospel. It means that one may be but a babe in Christ, or rather dull of learning in comparison to some of God's more gifted children, or simply wrong about a lot of conclusions he has drawn from his studies, and still be right about what is most important, his kinship to Jesus based on his obedience to the gospel.

This means also that the gospel is not the whole of the "New Testament," as is so commonly believed among Churches of Christ. The "New Testament," (more correctly, the New Covenant scriptures) is mostly teaching or *didache,* that is, instruction on how to be a Christian. Only that part that sets forth the good news of Jesus as the Savior of the world and how to become a Christian is the *gospel* or preaching. The gospel, therefore, is what brings us into Christ; the doctrine is what builds us up in Christ. When we come to see this distinction, the "New Testament" will become a new book to us — and we will have a more scriptural view of unity and fellowship.

We do not, therefore, have to see everything eye-to-eye in order to be united in Christ or to enjoy the fellowship of the Spirit together. Unity is based on our accepting Jesus (the gospel). Fellowship, which simply means "the shared life" in Christ, is not contingent on our understanding alike all the teaching of the New Covenant scriptures, for this is impossible since we are all in different grades. It is based only upon the gospel. If one believes in Jesus as Lord and has been baptized into him, he is our brother or sister — even if he as yet has comprehended but a small part of the apostles' doctrine.

This is to say that our differences about the millennium, the time and frequency of the Supper, the kind of music we are to have in the assembly, or whether we do missionary work through agencies has not one thing to do with whether we are in the the fellowship together. These things only mean that we differ on how we interpret certain aspects of the doctrine — or better still, the *silence* of the doctrine.

Some of my Texas and Tennessee brethren really get up tight when I suggest that Billy Graham is a gospel preacher. Since they see the whole of the New Covenant revelation as the gospel, they insist that Graham has to teach the truth about every single point of doctrine in order to be a gospel preacher. 1 point out that he is a gospel preacher when he lifts up Jesus as the risen Lord, like Peter did on Pentecost. 1 wish he would make clear the way that believers are to respond to the gospel, like Peter did, but even if the terms are not given I can rejoice. that Christ is preached. The terms are not *per se* part of the gospel, for Peter had preached the gospel before they ever asked him about how they were to obey it. It was, after all, the gospel that had cut them to the heart and moved them to cry out.

In Philip. 1:15f Paul explains that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, while others preach him out of love and sincerity. Then he says, "Whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached, and in that I rejoice." That is why I rejoice in Graham's work. One does not have to preach baptism in order to

proclaim Christ, for while baptism is the believer's way of responding to the gospel, it is not the gospel itself. Other-wise Paul would never have said, "Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach the gospel" (1 Cor. 1 :17).

This business of making all our opinions and interpretations of the scriptures part of the gospel is but to distort the gospel. If a church has the Sunday School, it is untrue to the gospel. It must have acappella music to be true to the gospel. One cannot be a gospel preacher if he supports the Herald of Truth TV-Radio program or if he is premillennial. A preacher has to be cut down to our size and made to fit our sectarian mold in order to be *a gospel* preacher. And it is we ourselves that are the most sectarian when we do that.

A major hurdle in overcoming our sectarian hang-ups is, therefore, to understand what the gospel is and what preaching the gospel means. The scriptures make it clear that the gospel is the message of salvation to the lost, as Paul shows in 1 Cor. 15: 1-8, and it consists of certain *facts* about Jesus, centered in his death, burial and resurrection. The facts are indisputable. One believes them or he does not. There is no ground for opinions or theories. One accepts it as *a fact* that Jesus died for our sins or he does not. So, we can all unite on those facts, and it is the event of Jesus in history and his exaltation as the risen Christ that is the ground of our fellowship one with another. Once in the fellowship where we share a common life in Jesus we are continually instructed in the apostles' doctrine, but here there will be and can be differences without the fellowship being threatened?

This is the basis for one of our great slogans. "In matters of faith (the gospel) unity; in matters of opinion (various interpretations of doctrine) liberty; in all things, love." Or as the pioneers often expressed it, the basis of unity and fellowship is the "one Lord, one faith, one baptism," which was another way of summarizing the essentials.

Campbell believed that we must make this distinction between preaching and teaching if our ministry is to be effective: "The difference between *preaching* and *teaching* Christ; so palpable in the apostolic age, though now confounded in the theoretic theologies of our day, must be well defined and clearly distinguished in the mind, in the style and utterance of an evangelist or missionary who would be a workman that needs not to blush, a workman covetous of the best gifts and of the richest rewards." *(Lectures and Addresses, p.* 536) He emphasized this distinction all his life. To the Kentucky Convention of 1853 he declared that:

> Preaching the gospel and teaching the converts are as distinct and distinguishable employments as enlisting an army and training it, or as creating a school and teaching it. Unhappily for the church and for the world, this distinction, if at all conceded as legitimate, is obliterated or annulled in almost all Protestant Christendom — *Mill. Harb.*, 1853, p. 541

He goes on to bemoan the fact that evangelists who proclaim the gospel to the lost and the pastors who minister the doctrine to the church are alike and without distinction called *preachers.* He makes it clear that the real problem is that they do not know what *the gospel is.*

Campbell's illustration of enrolling students in school is a fortunate one since that is the point of the Great Commission as given by Jesus in Mt. 28:18-19. "Make disciples of all nations" is what the gospel does. "Baptizing them" is the means of enrolling believers into the school of Christ. "Teaching them to observe all things" is the continued instruction in the apostles' doctrine. So, they are matriculated by believing the gospel and being baptized. They are taught in the apostles' curriculum *(didache)* from that point on, always advancing as disciples in the school of Christ, each according to his ability.

What kind of a school would it be that continues day after day to enroll the students over and over again? Or what about any army that keeps on inducting soldiers but never gets around to training them? And what of a church that is forever preaching to its own members, people who have long since heard the good news and obeyed it. Campbell is saying that the gospel is to be preached to the lost, not to the church.

Campbell puts this distinction as succinctly as possible: "To make the facts known is to preach, and to explain the meaning of the facts is to teach." In the 1853 *Millennial Harbinger* he deals with this "solid and important distinction which commends itself to every person of discernment" by defining the roles of preacher and teacher. "The *preacher* singly aims at the conversion of his hearers, while the *teacher* intends the development of a passage, a doctrine, a theory, or in vindicating the tenets he has espoused." He goes on to say that the preacher reclaims the heart white the teacher cultivates the under-standing and enlarges the conceptions of his pupil. And finally: "The preacher aims at producing faith in his auditory; the teacher at imparting knowledge to his disciple" (p. 546). He recognizes that some servants of the church are both preachers and teachers.

Again in the 1846 *Millennial Harbinger,* after quoting the eminent Prof. George Campbell of Aberdeen, Scotland to the effect that "No moral instructions or doctrinal explanations, given either by our Lord or by his Apostles, are ever, either in the Gospels or the Acts, denominated preaching," he goes on to conclude: "Thus we find that the preacher's mission is al-together to the world, and that he takes upon himself another office entirely, when he presumes to teach the church."

Alex Campbell then raises the question *of who is the teacher in the church?* "In the divinely constituted plan, which leaves nothing imperfect, there was an officer appointed for this express purpose. He is variously denominated Bishop, Elder, Pastor, and Teacher, all of which mean essentially the same officer."

Those of us who are heirs of Campbell's thought and suppose we have restored primitive Christianity would do well to look seriously to these next lines from his pen: "Me-thinks 1 see some knowing one curl his lip as he imagines a church taught by our Bishops or Elders. Well, I grant that there is some reason for his sneer, but he will please remember that I am not looking at things as they exist at present, but I am looking into the mirror of divine truth, in order to find out what they ought to be." (p. 318)

This distinction between preaching and teaching, or gospel and doctrine, remains vital to Campbell to his dying day. The last two articles that he wrote, in 1865 (a few months before his death), he set forth one more time his view of the evangelist as a missionary to the lost and the gospel as a series of specific facts about Jesus. In his very last article he listed the seven facts that make up the gospel. They are remarkably similar to the list drawn up 75 years later by C. H. Dodd, the British scholar, who jarred the scholarly world with his learned presentation on the difference between preaching and teaching, or *kerugma* and *didache,* in his now famous book, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Development.* The clergy across the world hardly knew what to think when the learned Prof. Dodd told them that most of what they call preaching in the pulpits of the modern church today is not preaching at all, but *teaching.* He went on to lay down distinctions that brought him fame, distinctions that are remarkably similar to what our own Alexander Campbell set forth three generations earlier.

We shall continue this line of thought in our next, dealing especially with *gospel* and *doctrine,* and we will give you more details on the Campbell-Dodd definition of the gospel, along with other scholarly sources that support this vital distinction.

In this installment we have, for the most part, set forth our thesis on preaching and teaching. In our next we shall defend the thesis, especially in the light of scripture. And our thesis is this: only belief and obedience to the gospel can be made terms of unity and fellowship, and not all the deductions drawn from the apostles' doctrine, however important these might be. Or to put it another way: the *kerugma* (preaching) brings us into the fellowship and makes us one in Christ; the *didache* (teaching) strengthens, deepens, and enriches the fellowship, where there will be (and has to be) diversity of opinion.

In the meantime I would like to give you an assignment. Kindly and lovingly ask your church leaders these questions: (1) Is there a distinction between preaching and teaching, and between gospel and doctrine? (2) If there is a distinction, what is it? (3) If not, why do such passages as Acts 5:42 use both terms? Are they merely synonyms?

I would like to hear from you as to the response you get. But now be careful, for the questions are mildly explosive. And remember that Camp-bell says that only the discerning will see or care to see the distinction. More next time. — *the Editor*

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Travel Letter . . .

FOR FREEDOM'S SAKE IN BIRMINGHAM

The May 7 issue of a Birmingham metro newspaper had an ad of the Cahaba Valley Church of Christ, 5199 Caldwell Mill Rd. which read FREE IN CHRIST — CAN TRUTH EXIST IN CENSORSHIP? This was followed by three pungent lines: *Free to think — Free to question — Free to hear.* Then came the invitation: "Cahaba Valley Church of Christ offers you an opportunity to decide for yourself who you shall hear and what you can scripturally accept." The speaker was Leroy Garrett, editor of *Restoration Review* and lecturer on Christian unity. As you might suppose, there is a story behind this, a story that reminds me of Hegel's observation that history is the story of man's struggle to be free.

The elders and others in the Cahaba Valley congregation have been readers of this journal for sometime. Some-time back they invited me to spend a few days with them, but as the time drew near for me to come they called and postponed it, explaining that some of the preachers in the area were giving them a hard time and they wanted me to come under as peaceful a circumstance as possible. I told them that I understood and that it might be just as well to cancel the engagement. But they were insistent that I should come sooner or later, so the affair was eventually set for May.

The two elders met me at the plane upon my arrival and we spent a couple of hours talking and praying about our work together They showed a real, shepherd-like concern for their flock, and they wanted to know what I planned to feed the sheep. I appreciated this very much, and explained that I was convinced that most of our problems stem from a lack of spiritual depth and so I had planned to present lessons that would encourage a closer walk with Jesus. I specifically named prayer as one study that I had planned. They thought this would be fine, doubting if their congregation would have any interest in lectures on unity and fellowship. I pointed out that these questions would likely be touched upon in passing, but that I was not intending to dwell at length on them.

I was surprised as to what became of these plans. Sunday a.m. and p.m. I presented lessons in keeping with what I had told the elders. We also had an afternoon session in one of the elders' homes, enhanced by the presence of Joe Black, a very able minister for the Lord who was visiting from Conway, Ark. So the spiritual feast that Lord's day ran for something like 12 hours with hardly a break. But at day's end I was informed that, while my teaching was edifying, it was not what people were expecting from Leroy Garrett. As one bright young deacon put it, "If we're going to be withdrawn from for having this guy with us, we want to hear about those things that make him so controversial." It doesn't make sense for Leroy Garrett to be lecturing on prayer!

So the elders were now having second thoughts. Maybe I had better do my thing after all. They were being asked, "Why is this guy so controversial?" that they now thought that I should present some of my views that have made me such a notorious character, though they didn't put it just that way. Now

I was going to have to disobey Ouida. She heard me recently in a series on prayer at our Denton congregation on several Sunday evenings and she urged me to present some of the same material in Birmingham. It would be such a blessing to them, she insisted.

There was something strangely unlikely about all this, a circumstance that would be puzzling to my unfriendly brethren. Here I was at a mainline, bona fide, non-instrument Church of Christ doing my best to present lessons of a deep spiritual sort, rooted in some of the great scriptures of both Testaments, and with no particular compulsion to talk on unity and fellowship. But the elders wanted me to "ride my hobbies," as my critics might put it. Things are surely changing!

All this amused me, and I told the elders, not altogether in jest, that I'm damned if I do and I'm damned if I don't. But I had no objections to telling the congregation — young, bright, affluent, growing — why I am such a bad guy and why some of our preachers quit talking about Jesus (!) and start talking about me when a congregation dares to be free enough to ask me to come. But I chose to do it by the exploration of one passage, Acts 2:42: "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, in fellowship . . ." That is as far as we got during the next two days. I distinguished between the gospel that Peter had just preached and the doctrine that the disciples continued to be schooled in. I pointed out that the *Jerusalem Bible,* in a footnote on this verse, makes this distinction very clear, and that if those Catholic scholars can see it, and that if Alexander Campbell and J. W. McGarvey could see it, then our Church of Christ preachers ought to see it. I showed how this whole problem of unity and fellowship is resolved by recognizing this distinction that is made by the Spirit in the scriptures. I observed that fellowship is that "shared life" into which God calls us through the gospel, and that we have not one thing to do with a person's entering that fellowship or continuing in it, except to love and accept him. We can no more "with-draw fellowship" from someone than we can put one into the fellowship, and for one congregation to talk about withdrawing fellowship from another one is both anti-scriptural and asinine. I showed that organs, classes, cups, literature, millennial views, women teachers, TV programs, and all the rest have not one thing in this world to do with fellowship, but that they are simply different impressions that we draw from the apostles' doctrine, what it says or doesn't say about a thousand things.

My friend and brother (and fellow editor), J. D. Tant, was in the audience one night. This same church has also invited him to speak sometime soon, and I am glad. Yater told me he thought I was completely wrong, which came as no great surprise. He wanted to know if I made only the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord the gospel or if, as some of our old pioneers put it, there were *commands* to be obeyed and *promises* to be enjoyed as well as *facts* to be believed. Staying with Peter's presentation on Pentecost and Paul's definition in 1 Cor. 15, I replied that strictly speaking only the facts are the gospel and that the commands and promises are related to the gospel, but that I have no objection to the gospel being set forth in terms of facts, commands and promises. My objection is to making everything in the New Testament, and every deduction drawn therefrom, the gospel!

Well, those handsome young deacons (there are nine of them) got the point. As one of them put it, "Whether we agree or not, *now* we know why you are controversial!" They also know, just as Yater knows, that they do not have to agree with me for me to love and appreciate them. It is just as well, for I might not have all that many to love in the Church of Christ, if they had to agree with me. I have an awful hard time convincing my people that instrumental music, *pro* or *con,* is not part of the gospel.

Despite the postponement my visit was not graciously received by some of the Birmingham preachers. Though the congregation was agreed, perhaps unanimously, that I should come, pressure was applied to keep me out, all claims to church autonomy not-withstanding. The elders sought to be conciliatory, but it became a matter of their own responsibility as shepherds over against dictation from without. Many of our leaders are tiring of this sort of ecclesiasticism and are rebelling against it. It is for the sake of the saints' freedom in Christ. As their ad read, the freedom to think, to question, and to hear is the issue. It is not important that I speak to them, but it is important that they be free (and even encouraged) to hear varying points of view.

In this case Cahaba Valley's own minister, a fine young man, objected to my coming. He explained to me that he deemed it unwise, that it would prejudice other congregations against a vital ministry that Cahaba Valley could otherwise have. He indicated that other preachers would refuse to visit with them, tainted as the congregation would be by my visit. It seems that other preachers were putting pressure on him to keep me out of *his* congregation just as they were able to keep me out of *theirs.* This led him to do a reckless thing. He laid his job on the line. If I came, he would leave, he told the assembled officers. The elders warned him not to press his case, to leave the decision in their hands and to stay out of it. He played roulette with his job, and lost. I did not know, of course, that anything like this was going on or I would have excused myself for the sake of peace. But it is now evident that congregational freedom and autonomy are the issues in this case, not Leroy Garrett. The elders saw the pressure and interference on the part of certain preachers as censorship and blackmail, and they had no intention of being intimidated. By the time I arrived the preacher was out laying carpet for a living, which impressed me most favor-ably. Ouida and I have done a lot of that kind of work ourselves, and I see it as a most honorable way for a preacher to make a living. It is just possible that a preacher is more like Jesus and Paul when he works like that than when he takes a job with a church as its minister, if being like Jesus and Paul is still important.

That a preacher would resign his job in protest to my coming to his congregation impressed me as so monstrously unnecessary that I wanted to talk with him about it privately. He was kind enough to bear me to the airport on the morning I left, so we had time for a good talk. He is a delightful brother, intelligent and well educated and with a great capacity for good in this world. *Why?,* I asked him, did he think it necessary to stick his neck out like that. Why couldn't he tell the preachers that he was not the pastor at Cahaba Valley, but a servant for Jesus' sake, and that it was not his role to make such

decisions? I pointed out that my coming was not really all that big a deal, so why all the excitement? After all, I explained, I have spoken to numerous Churches of Christ in recent years, and while there may have been some flak there were no grievous aftereffects. The churches are still in business!

But he knew and I knew what it all boils down to: *party politics.* He wanted to be "in," to be accepted by the gang at the preachers' luncheons, and all that. You can't rate top drawer status with fellows like me coming around. They pressed him to keep me out, and he felt that he had to do so to win their approval, when in fact he probably agrees with me more than with them. So, he rolled his dice — and lost. Like a center fielder who errs by taking his eye off the ball, our dear brother, too conscious of party approval, took his eye off Jesus. We had a beautiful conversation together, free and brotherly, and we departed amidst embraces and tears. I love him for Jesus' sake and I believe he is going to be all right. As I boarded the plane I found myself hating all the more our stinking partyism and all the chicanery and littleness that goes along with it — and what it does to men who would otherwise be magnanimous souls. I pondered Thomas Campbell's words, "It is a horrid evil, fraught with many evils." But I love our dear brothers who get caught in its net.

Once on the plane I found myself saying to the Lord, "Have we all lost our cockeyed minds? With the world aflame we limp along with problems like this!" I buckled up and settled down to reading the last issue of *Mission,* which I think is good for our insanity. Shortly after take off, the young lady sitting next to me asked if I were a Church of Christ preacher. I replied, *Sort of,* and we had a delightful visit all the way to New Orleans, where she deplaned. She revealed that she had a burning desire to be an airline hostess, but could not for conscience' sake since she had to serve drinks. I tried to show her that it was Delta that served the drinks, not the hostess, and that she would be serving as an agent of the airline, but she didn't buy it, and I had to agree that she couldn't be a hostess. Too bad, for Delta lost a good one in her. I had a little more success in assuring her that she could go to a "liberal" Church of Christ (that con-tributes to Herald of Truth) with her roommate without personally approving of what she thought was wrong.

We had a good time talking about Jesus and what is really important about our faith, and I think we were relating to each other real well. "By the way, what is your name?" she asked as we neared New Orleans. I don't know why she had to spoil things with a loaded question like that. To reveal my name in some circumstances is sort of like confessing my sins. *"You* are Leroy Garrett!" she kept saying. The daughter of a "conservative" Church of Christ minister, she explained that she had heard of me all her life. But I think we departed with our relationship still in good repair.

When Ouida met me at D-FW shortly afterwards, I dared not venture a kiss, but shook her hand formally and said, "My name is Leroy Garrett and I'm sorry!" Her laughter warmed my heart.

But the story does not end here, and you are not going to believe the rest, if indeed you have been credulous thus far. I was not at home long when the county sheriff called: *Are you Leroy Garrett?* I affirmed boldly that I was, now being in something of a fighting mood. He had a citation for me and he

had to serve it. I was being sued, he explained. What *for?* He read to me from the petition which is now on my desk beside me: "That on or about Nov. 5, 1976, the plaintiff, George Landin, was a customer in the Freeman's Grocery Store in Caldwell, Texas and while there the plaintiff purchased a package of Levi Garrett chewing tobacco. The plaintiff put some of the tobacco in his mouth and when he started chewing it the inside of his mouth began to burn and his face started swelling. He had to seek medical attention and was hospitalized for several days as a result of the injuries to his mouth and face which he received after chewing the tobacco." The petition went on to say that at the trial they would prove that the tobacco was defective and that they wanted $150,000 in damages. In the petition the name of the defendant would alternate from Levi Garrett to Leroy Garrett.

Now I realized it was a joke, so I laughed in the sheriff's face and wanted to know who he really was. I had been visiting a congregation in the county from which the petition originated, and finding them the smokingest as well as the lovingest church you'd ever meet, I had told them the last time I was there that I was going to start praying that they'd quit smoking — especially in the assembly room, men and women alike! I thought sure some of the more playful ones were getting back at me in this way, so I wanted who-ever it was to quit spoofing and come on out to the house.

But the sheriff let me know in no uncertain terms that he was the sheriff and that it was no joke. So now I am being sued for $150,000 for selling Garrett's plug tobacco in Caldwell, Texas.

I wrote the lawyer that prepared this wild document and explained to him that I am not Levi Garrett, that I was in the fried chicken business and am now in the book business, and that I am not, thank God, in the tobacco business. I added that he might find Levi Garrett and Co. somewhere in the Carolinas!

Ouida keeps telling me that I need to change my name, that if I did so I would enter upon an era of popularity beyond my imagination, for she is convinced that most folk in our churches really believe like I do. Nor would I get sued for selling tobacco! I tell her that the Lord is going to take care of that. More and more I look to that promise in Rev. 3:12: "I will also write on him my new name."

But damned as I might be for being Leroy, I am *not* Levi Garrett. That I can prove even in court. Maybe! — *the Editor*

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Pilgrimage of Joy . . .

THE DEBATING YEARS BEGIN

W. Carl Ketcherside

The little town of Ozark is the county seat of Christian County, Missouri. It is built around the courthouse square, and is a lovely and peaceful community except when a trial of note takes place in the courtroom. Perhaps the most exciting of such events was when the leader of the "Bald Knobbers" was sentenced to death a number of years ago. The Bald Knobbers were a lawless element ruling the hill country by threats and violence. They took their name from the rock-strewn treeless crests of hills where they hung their signal lanterns when getting ready for a foray. When the law finally caught up with them, the leader was sentenced to "hang by the neck until dead" and the sentence was carried out on an open scaffold erected in the courtyard. It attracted about the largest crowd ever seen in Ozark.

It was in Ozark I debated Rue Porter four nights, March 23-26, 1937. The debate resulted from a chain of circumstances. The congregation at Ozark had only one elder left, Charles F. Boyd, a respected attorney, and for a number of years the County Superintendent of Schools. In 1933, while I was in a meeting at Nixa, he arranged for me to conduct a similar meeting at Ozark the following year. As the date for the meeting was approaching he was visited by several members of the congregation who had recently moved into the area and who demanded that he cancel it. They objected that I was not a "loyal preacher," being an opponent of orphan homes and colleges, created and maintained by the brethren. They did not want their names associated with that of an "anti." Brother Boyd firmly insisted he would not dispense with the meeting purely on the basis of their protests.

As time for the meeting drew near a number of them walked out and formed a rival congregation which began meeting in the Klepper Funeral Home. I conducted the meeting for which I had been scheduled, and while I was there announcements were posted about town to the effect that Rue Porter, of Neosho, Missouri would hold a meeting at the other place. Meanwhile I received a letter from Elton Abernathy who had graduated from Abilene Christian College and was associated with the Speech Department of the University of Iowa, suggesting that we discuss the whole question of "extra institutions" at Springfield, Missouri. He proposed a public debate there during the Christmas holidays of 1936.

I accepted at once and secured the promise of wholehearted cooperation from the brethren in Springfield who opposed the institutionalizing of the teaching and charitable functions of the body of Christ. While I was preparing for the encounter I received a letter from Brother Abernathy bowing out of the discussion and apologizing for even suggesting it. The brethren whom he purposed to represent had notified him they did not want these matters discussed in their area and would vigorously oppose such a debate. It was at this time word was conveyed to me that Brother Porter had publicly stated in a meeting at Ozark, held under the auspices of the brethren who were meeting in the Klepper Funeral Home, that we did not have a man among us who would dare to stand on the same platform with him and debate these matters.

I immediately wrote to him and told him I was picking up the gauntlet he had flung down and would gladly engage in a discussion with him. We agreed upon all of the details without lengthy correspondence. The Works Progress Administration had erected a lovely large Community Hall in the center of Ozark and we decided to use its spacious auditorium. There was no other place large enough to accommodate the audience . Excitement ran high and almost a thousand people crowded into the little town each night for the event.

Although I had never met Brother Porter, I knew a great deal about him and all of it was good. He was in the generation preceding mine, being twenty years older than myself. He was approaching his forty-eighth birthday, and I was less than two months away from my twenty-ninth. During the debate he constantly referred to me as "the boy." Brother Porter was one of a special class of preachers produced by the Churches of Christ in Arkansas and the Missouri Ozarks during that era. Many of these had no college training, but they knew the text of the Bible so thoroughly they could reel off whole chapters of it in one sermon, giving "book, chapter and verse," for every point of emphasis as they constantly reminded the audience.

They made great sacrifices of time and comfort, going often into remote rural areas for meetings, and being away from home for weeks on end. They held meetings in schoolhouses, brush arbors, and in the open air, as well as in little white meeting-houses. Often they were underpaid, sometimes taking a side of bacon, a gallon of sorghum molasses, or garden produce as part of their remuneration. Many of them gratified their hearers by "skinning the sects" and nothing pleased them more than to goad the Baptists into a free-for-all, and a verbal tug of war! Of course there were Baptists who loved it also, and men like Ben M. Bogard of the Landmark Missionary Baptist Church held there was no closed season on Campbellites. These country preachers on both sides were as "keen as a briar" and each one knew exactly what his opponent would say in reply to his arguments.

When Brother Porter and I met he had already engaged in twenty-five debates, all but one with Baptist preachers. He chose as his moderator, Joe Blue, another well-known hill country preacher and debater. I selected as my moderator W. G. Roberts. He was always ready to tangle with anyone in debate but specialized on Mormons. His favorite proposition was: "Resolved that Joseph Smith was a polygamist, a thief and a liar." He was ready to affirm it at the drop of a hat and if no one dropped a hat, he would throw down his own and affirm it anyhow.

My initial meeting with Brother Porter was when I shook hands with him on the platform the first night. In appearance he reminded me of Abraham Lincoln. His was the first affirmative, so he would both open and close the debate. The proposition he affirmed read: "The erection and maintenance of orphans homes, such as Tipton Orphans Home, Southern Christian Home, and others of like character, for the purpose of housing and otherwise caring for orphan children, is authorized by the New

Testament scriptures." When the hour arrived to begin Brother Blue called on Brother H. H. Kiestlekamp of Rolla, Missouri to lead in prayer. Each side always called on a visitor favorable to their position. Neither side recognized an opposing preacher as worthy to talk to the Father.

After his preliminary remarks during which Brother Porter defined the terms of his proposition, he turned to the scriptures which he insisted authorized the building and maintenance of orphan homes. They were James 1:27, Ephesians 2:10, Galatians 4:18, Hebrews 13:16, and Romans 12:13. He declared that James 1:27 "will be the rallying ground and the center of controversy, as the place around which every argument I shall make will be built. I propose to make but one argument on this entire proposition. One argument!"

My reply will be obvious to the reader, and I made it! When we are to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, Brother Porter denied that the word "go" included a missionary society. By the same kind of reasoning, when we are told to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, I denied that the word "visit" included a charitable organization or society. Moreover James 1:27 not only enjoins one to visit the fatherless but to keep himself unspotted from the world. I asked Brother Porter what kind of organization he would recommend for the last half of the verse.

The reporter for the Springfield newspaper who covered the event did a lengthy write-up after the first night. It featured the debate on the front page with headlines and carried over to the back page in a kind of blow-by-blow account. The cartoonist who accompanied the reporter did caricatures of both debaters. As a result of the publicity the feeling was a little more intense the second night. As I pressed my respondent, Brother Blue interposed several times while I was speaking. Brother Porter and I never "lost our cool" but some in the audience were not so calm. After the discussion for that evening was ended the people refused to leave. They stood about in small groups assessing the merits of the speeches. An elder passing by one small knot of brethren, overheard one remark, "That Ketcherside ought to be taken out and tied to a tree and whipped."

On the third night it was my time to lead out. The proposition read: "The erection and maintenance of schools or colleges, such as Abilene Christian College, David Lipscomb College, and others of like character, for the purpose of teaching the Bible and other branches of learning in connection, is contrary to the New Testament, and should be opposed as an innovation in the church" My moderator collaborated with Brother Blue in urging the hearers to leave the debating to the men on the platform and not to "get warm under the collar" as some did the night before. He called upon D. Austen Sommer to lead the prayer and then introduced me for the first affirmative.

After defining my terms in formal fashion I said, "I shall demonstrate that the Bible College is the introduction of something new into the Church of Jesus Christ and should be regarded as something not apostolic, and therefore, contrary to the New Testament Scripture." I then proceeded with a chain of scriptural passages which had about as much bearing on my theme as the ones cited by Brother Porter did on his. I reinforced my charges with quotations from Alexander Campbell, J. N. Armstrong, David

Lipscomb, the Freed-Hardeman College Bulletin and the Abilene Christian College Bulletin. Some of these were a little careless and unguarded in their statements and played right into my hands. I had researched them meticulously and had them indexed like a Philadelphia lawyer.

Brother Porter was indeed a worthy respondent. He placed the questions we were discussing in the realm of opinion, saying, "These are questions of an individual nature. They are for the Christian to decide as an individual. It is a matter of opinion not a matter of law. No sir, it isn't a matter of law." His position was that a teacher in one of the schools was simply an individual exercising his right and duty to teach the Bible as he would in the home or on the street. Brother Porter told who did not own the schools, but he never told who did.

When the fourth night of discussion was ending and time was celled on Brother Porter, he said, "Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, the debate is over. May God bless every one of you. Carl, I want to shake your hand as a manifestation of my friendliness toward you. I love you, and will be your friend for as long as we live."

I replied, "Thank you! I appreciate greatly the opportunity of discussing these issues with you, and I hope the time will soon come when all of God's people may be one in Christ." When I said it, I knew there would never be oneness until Brother Porter and all who stood with him reached the conclusion that I was right and they were wrong, and came to do obeisance and confess their error for endorsing such things as the orphans homes and Christian colleges.

But my respect for Brother Porter, already great, increased with the passing of the years. When he grew old and was unable to continue in active labor in the vineyard because of his infirmities, an appeal for financial assistance was made to pay for his heavy doctor and hospital expenditures. Nell and I wrote him about our prayers in his behalf which were fervent and sent a check to help in his time of distress. His reply was gentle and gracious, and when I heard that he had been summoned to meet the Lord I felt a real sense of personal loss. I expect to meet him some day in a land where there will be no further challenges and fellowship will not be judged upon the basis of earthly knowledge or of human conformity.

I doubt that the debate changed many minds. People left with the same prejudices they had when they came. The same congregations remain in Ozark although four decades have come and gone and most of the principals in the original cleavage are asleep with their fathers. The division has taken on new dimensions with the passing of time. It has solidified and crystallized. There is little remembrance that the saints once ate together at a common table.

But the discussion launched me as a debater in a factional orbit. I think now that I thought more highly of myself than I ought to have thought. This feeling was no doubt enhanced by the fact that congregations with which I had labored in Springfield, Saint Louis and Kansas City publicly challenged Brother Porter to meet me in their cities. He at first indicated he would but then declined to

do so. This stimulated my unholy egotism, especially when I learned from a reliable source that several preachers told Brother Porter that if he debated the issues with me in these centers he would set their cause back fifty years.

I confess with some little regret, and even a sense of shame, that I delighted in such confrontations. I liked being the "gun-toter" for a small party and taking on the best that the big "mainline" churches had to offer. Before I became convinced of the detrimentality of debates to the cause for which Jesus died I debated most of the recognized gladiators of that era — G. C. Brewer, G. K. Wallace, Sterl Watson, W. L. Totty, Flavil Colley, and others.

We were lawyers for the prosecution seeking to interpret as a legalistic code the revelation of God given in love. All of us, without realizing it, were casuists, justifying what we did and condemning what others did, and doing so arbitrarily. We were defending a pattern which was not there and seeking to impose a binding dogmatism which God did not impart. But we had to go through this stage. It was a part of the maturing process for a movement seeking for status in a world made up of ancient religious forms which were hallowed and respected because of their age. We could, like children, call attention to our presence by fighting one another. I suspect the world looked on with amusement at our antics. I now look at them the same way! — *139 Signal Hill Dr., St. Louis 63121*

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Highlights from Our Past . . .

HOW WE TEXANS FUSSED AND DIVIDED
(But there were some heroes)

J. D. Tant, one of our pioneer preachers in the Lone Star state, used to say in his declining years, "We have 16 different kinds of loyal Churches of Christ in Texas." It was (and is) barely an exaggeration. There is probably no town in Texas with a population of 2,000 or more that does not have a Church of Christ (non-instrument), and many of our towns have two or three different kinds of Churches of Christ and a few places have as many as six or eight, none of which has any fellowship with the others. Here in Denton we did have four different kinds until the "premill" Church of Christ disbanded. Now we have three different kinds, not counting the new "walk out" church where Ouida and 1 are now attending. Since they accept all baptized believers as within the fellowship and do not draw the party lines that we are talking about, it would not be fair to list them as "a different kind," but in one important sense they are certainly different. And scores of people in this city thank God for the difference! But since they do not exclude from their fellowship those in other congregations (the Christian Church minister was recently a visiting speaker) they cannot be listed as a separate faction in

our Movement. Even so, counting the Christian Church and the Disciples we now have five different kinds of Restoration Movement churches. There are five "main line" Churches of Christ, counting the "walk out" group, one non-Sunday School and one "conservative" (non cooperative) group.

But at this time a century ago we were still one people, even though the Movement was 70 years old and had been in Texas almost a half century. In our recent surveys we have said something about how all this happened. In this piece we are telling more about our fussing and dividing by pointing to a particular instance or two. You will find it interesting, and, 1 hope, profitable. We ought to be able to learn from our mistakes.

Back at the turn of the century we had a little college here in Denton known as Southwestern Christian College, which was of the "conservative" persuasion and opposed the "progressives" who were beginning to use the instrument and the missionary society. The "conservatives" were also known as the "Firm Foundation faction" (many of them were) in that they not only opposed the organ and the society but also constituted a "re-baptism" party, which set them in opposition even to other Churches of Christ outside Texas. They insisted that one had to understand that baptism was for the remission of sins in order for it to be valid. So they went about re-baptizing not only Baptists, whom we had always theretofore accepted, but even those in our own churches who did not realize when they were baptized that it was for the remission of sins. This practice was vehemently opposed by David Lipscomb, editor of the *Gospel Advocate* in Nashville, the brother that we respectfully and not without justification call "the bishop of the south." This faction was led by Austin McGary of Austin, who started the *Firm Foundation* for that purpose.

The dean of our little Denton college was also a physician, Dr. H. G. Fleming, a "Campbellite" if there ever was one, for he was well read in Campbell's writings and he understood the genius of the Movement. When a "progressive" brother came to Denton to lecture on the freedom believers have in Christian ministry, he issued a special invitation to the conservatives. Dr. Fleming was one of those that accepted. Back in those days it was common practice for a speaker to allow his audience time for response once he had concluded. Dr. Fleming, aware that "progressives" and "conservatives" were on a collision course toward division, stood and made the following statement, which is still preserved in the archives of the Denton *Record-Chronicle*, and which still stands as probably the most glorious paragraphs ever to come out of our Texas history, certainly from Denton, including whatever merit one may find in the columns of this journal which emanates from the same little city. Here is what he said:

> On coming to Texas I found a condition that would make angels weep and the blessed Lord bleed afresh . . .

> I am convinced, brethren, that all division is of the devil. I do not believe that God's children can divide so long as they love one another from the heart fervently. The evil one must first expel love, `that golden chain that binds the happy souls above,' and filled the heart with malice, hatred and evil speaking before he can succeed in preaching strife and division.
>
> Brethren, a most serious problem confronts us. It is a war of consciences.
>
> Brother McPherson (the speaker for the occasion) tells us that it is his conscientious conviction that he can best serve the purpose of God in the spread of the gospel by cooperating with what is styled a missionary society; and that not to do so is a violation of his conscience. Another brother, equally honest, does not feel that he can cooperate with a missionary society, without sinning against his conscience. What is to be done?
>
> Is the conflict of conscience a justifiable ground for division? 1 do not believe it is. Why should Bro. McPherson hate his brother who had a conscience against a society? And why should the brother hate Bro. McPherson because he has a conscience for the society? Must they place each other under the ban of non-fellowship because of differences over a missionary society? I answer, let Bro. McPherson not force the society on the conscience of the brother, and let the brother accord to Bro. McPherson his individual liberty in the exercise of his conscientious convictions concerning a missionary society, Or, as Brother McGarvey suggests, let each brother be free to give to a missionary society as an individual without molestation, but where unpleasant division would be caused in a congregation, let the contributions be individual and not the congregation as a whole.

That ends the quotation and it also ended the beloved physician. The college fired him for making that speech! That reveals better than any words could tell why we have divided and sub-divided in Texas. It was not the society or the organ that divided us, but the ugly spirit that sought to destroy Dr. Fleming for being a man of peace and for reminding his brethren of the principles that gave birth to the Movement. Notice his reference to J. W. McGarvey. The doctor went on to publish six articles on "Alexander Campbell and the Society." He wanted to remind his brethren that in rejecting his plea for peace they were rejecting the very principles of Restoration that they were supposed to believe — and if they could not accept him they couldn't accept Campbell either.

The feudin' and the fussin' went on until finally by 1906 the Churches of Christ, including those in Texas, were recognized as a separate denomination. Our folk had only a few formal debates with each other, but there were a few in Texas on the societies, the instrument, and the rebaptism question. In Paxton, Texas in 1910 one brother affirmed in a debate, "That baptism being for the remission of sin, all the designs of baptism must be understood before it becomes valid."

It was primarily the editors that kept the divisive fires aflame. For instance, the editor of the *Christian Preacher* wrote of another editor in 1880: "I challenged him upon stating as a reason for not debating with me that I was too rough. And well he may, for if I can ever get a chance at him I will not leave a sectarian bump on him. I have no use for a milk and water slick. I hear that he is a pig on the mountain and a puppy in the valley. Let him keep his tongue or bite it off, as it is better to go to heaven with half a tongue than to hell with one as long as your arm."

Outside the areas influenced by the editors, the brethren paid little attention to the "issues." As late as the 1930's one "progressive" kept being invited to a non-organ church. When he asked them why they didn't invite an anti-organ man, they replied, "Oh, it's all the same to us. We thought the reason we didn't have an organ was that we couldn't afford to buy one."

And there were some vicious lawsuits along the way, the one in McGregor, Texas going all the way to the state's Supreme Court. Once the party spirit got the upper-hand, they sponsored rival gospel meetings and locked each other out of the building. They went to court in Waco in 1898 in a quarrel over the property. The "progressives" argued that they were following the original practice of the Movement by making nothing a test of fellowship except faith and baptism. They alleged that the "conservatives" had departed from the original plea by making a test of fellowship over three things: organs, societies, and understanding the purpose of baptism. The judge listened to witnesses on both sides, men who told of the Movement and its original purposes and practices. It was agreed that the whole case hinged on who was faithful to "the Reformation that started about 1810."

The judge decided that those who made no tests of fellowship except faith and baptism were the true heirs of the Movement and ordered the property to be turned back to them (they had been locked out by the other side changing locks). The "Firm Foundation faction," as it was referred to in court records, appealed to a higher court and finally to the highest court of the state. Both courts agreed with the lower court that those who followed the simple creed of faith and baptism as the only basis of fellowship were the true heirs of the Restoration Movement.

Well, if we turn a deaf ear to our own heroes who dare to stand up in our assemblies and remind us of the simple, trusting faith of our pioneers who launched a Movement to "unite the Christians in all the sects" on the basis of faith and obedience to Jesus, and that only, we are not likely to pay any attention to the "unbelievers" in our courts of justice who look at our history and tell us the same thing.

So, to our lasting shame, we Texans ignored it all, and went on fussing and dividing. Now we have not two sects but several, and not just three tests of fellowship besides faith and baptism but a dozen or more.

There is only one who can teach us, and that is the Holy Spirit, whose unity we have long since been instructed to preserve in love, peace and forbearance. — *the Editor*

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NOTICES

We are pleased to have sold several sets of *Millennial Harbinger,* a 41 volume work by Alexander Campbell, beautifully reproduced by College Press for $289.00, which is $61.00 below retail price to our readers only. If necessary, we might be able to arrange for you to pay for it in three payments at 30 day intervals

When your subscription expires you are notified by way of a hand stamp on your last copy, *Your Sub Expires With This Issue.* Until this appears you will continue getting the paper. Usually, but not always, Ouida sends still one more issue (if we have them to spare) with still another stamp, *Final Notice, etc.* Our operation is very simple and we don't have any plan for badgering folk to renew, but this device makes it clear enough when your sub has run out. We do urge you to renew promptly if you opt to stay with us. Subs are $3.00 per year; $5.00 for two years; in clubs of 5 or more $1.50 per name per year, and we do all the mailing from here. If you want a bundle for yourself, the price is 25 cents a copy for ten or more.

We are pleased that some of our new readers take advantage of our offer of 18 assorted back issues for only $3.00, including postage, for this gives them a feel of what we've been saying in years past.

When you move we must have *both* your old and new address. When you don't do this, we have to write you at your new address and ask you where you moved from! This is because our sub list is arranged not by names but by zip codes. We are very thankful that nearly everyone does this. Too, the postal people are in some areas becoming hard taskmasters. We got a return from a small Oregon town because we did not have "St." following the name of the street. All else was correct. The subscriber's paper was destroyed and we had to pay 25 cents for the notice.

Randy Becton's "You're Not Alone" is one of the most relevant articles to appear recently in *Firm Foundation* (Jan. 11, 1977). It is a special message to those suffering from cancer, copies of which can be had by writing to the author at Box 2439, Abilene, Tx. 79604. Randy himself is afflicted with lymphoma and has undergone surgery several times and two years of chemotherapy. He is now in

remission and is praying for further remission. He has special concern for his young children. He shares some truths that his shattering illness has brought home to him: (1) Cancer only sharpens the focus on what is already a fact with us all: life is as a vapor and everyone is terminal; (2) We can have a security that even cancer cannot threaten, Jesus Christ; even if the earthly tent is folded by way of cancer, a dwelling that is eternal is ours; (3) When we pray amidst serious illness, we should tell God exactly how we feel and exactly what we want; (4) Always we are to remember that we are not alone; even "in the valley" he is there. The article pulsates with warmth and meaning and it should prove to be a blessing to any believer who is seriously ill.

Carl Ketcherside's *Talks to Jews and Non Jews* will be published on June 15. If you will send us $5.20, which includes postage and mailing, we will send you a copy as soon as they are released. Already available is Carl's *The Twisted Scriptures*, now in handsome paperback, and the complete price is $3.25. While you are ordering you can pick up Carl's *Heaven Help Us* (on the Holy Spirit) and *The Death of the Custodian* at $3.20 each.

July 27-30 Carl Ketcherside and I will be at Random Rd. Chapel in Arkansas City, Ks. Call Dr. Max Foster, 316-442-5034.

Gospel Tidings is a paper emanating from the non-Sunday School Churches of Christ. It now has a new editor, Larry Branum, 1200 N. Loop, Austin, Tx. 78756. By writing to him you can get a sample copy. Larry has for a long time been interested in the oneness of all God's children, and he has been instrumental in putting together some effective unity meetings. Change along these lines is not so apparent in any of our groups as among these brethren.

Our next issue will be in September. Our bound volume, 1975-76, is now available for 5.95.

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Address all mail to: 1201 Windsor Dr., Denton, TX 76201*

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